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ABSTRACT

To evaluate the outreach and marketing efforts for its non-credit offerings, William Rainey Harper College in Illinois conducted a study of recent continuing education students in spring 1996. First, a random sample of 200 former students who had enrolled in continuing education courses in the past 5 years was surveyed, receiving 57 completed responses. In addition, telephone surveys were conducted with 152 adult district residents who had never enrolled in continuing education at the college. Study findings included the following: (1) 67.3% of the former students and 65.8% of the district residents indicated that they were aware that separate credit and non-credit schedules were mailed to their home; (2) for both groups, the most important factors influencing their decision to enroll were the convenience of course time and/or location and course selection and content; (3) with respect to elements that would catch their attention in the printed schedules, 46% of the former students indicated large type and 40% of the district residents thought that making the schedule magazine size would catch their attention; and (4) 85% of the former students through thtat it was easy to find information in the current schedule. The survey instruments are appended. (BCY)

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ED 397 910

William Rainey Harper College

Office of

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Volume XXIV, No. 16
May 1996

SURVEY OF STUDENTS AND NON-STUDENTS ABOUT CONTINUING EDUCATION MARKET PLACE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to survey recent continuing education students and some of the general adult population who were non-students in order to evaluate outreach and packaging efforts in Harper College's non-credit offerings.

Two hundred continuing education students from the last five years were sampled and after two mailings a 29 percent response rate was obtained. The adult population was sampled by telephoning 200 households at random selection in the telephone directory and talking to the first adult who answered the telephone. A screening question asked if they had ever attended Harper College continuing education courses. If yes, they were eliminated, leaving 152 adults from which survey information was collected.

Results indicated recent continuing education students and potential students within the general adult population varied little on most factors of outreach efforts and packaging of courses. Time, course content and variety were the most important attractions. Personal enrichment and workforce/professional were the most popular type of offerings. The most attractive features for a newsprint schedule were student benefit stories, information on faculty, large type and magazine size. While there is significant competition for continuing education offerings, recent students expect the quality of offerings at Harper to be superior to offerings elsewhere.

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Purpose

The purpose of this study was to survey recent continuing education students and some of the general adult population (non-Harper students) to evaluate outreach and packaging efforts in Harper's non-credit offerings. The study is part of the Program Review process and was requested by the Continuing Education Forum.

Population Surveyed and Methodology

The survey instruments shown in the appendix were developed jointly by the Office of Planning and Research and the Office of Community and Program Services. The first survey was addressed to students who had been enrolled in continuing education at Harper College within the last five years. A random sample of 200 students was drawn from this population. Two mailings of the survey instrument were made to this sample and after these two mailings, 57 completed surveys were returned for a 28.5 percent response rate.

The other survey targeted the general adult population who had not been continuing education students at Harper College. This sample was selected by picking a random sample of 200 households in the Harper District from the telephone directory. Telephone calls were made to the first adult answering. A screening question asked whether they had ever been a continuing education student. If they had been, the call was discontinued. This left 152 adults who met the criteria and they, in turn, were surveyed by telephone.

Major Conclusions

Results indicated recent continuing education students and potential students within the general adult population varied little on most factors of outreach efforts and packaging of courses. Time, course content and variety were the most important attractions. Personal enrichment and workforce/professional were the most popular type of offerings. The most attractive features for a newsprint schedule were student benefit stories, information on faculty, large type and magazine size. While there is significant competition for continuing education offerings, recent students expect the quality of offerings at Harper to be superior to offerings elsewhere.

Discussion of Results

Interestingly, both the recent continuing education students and the general adult population who were not Harper College students responded similarly on a number of the items. Both were equally aware (two-thirds) of the two different course schedules mailed to their homes - one for credit and one for non-credit. The most important factors in motivating both groups to enroll at Harper would be convenience of time and location, and course selection and content, which were expressed in two different items. The most attractive types of offerings for these persons were first, personal enrichment and second, workforce professional. They both indicated that the top two features which would make the newsprint more personal were testimonies and pictures of people who have benefited from continuing education, and pictures and biographies of some of the faculty.

The two groups differed somewhat on two items. When asked what features would most catch their attention in the newsprint schedule, the recent continuing education students said the leading candidate was large type (46%). The general adult population selected magazine size (40%) as their top choice. College graduates from both groups were asked how they most would like to get their information on continuing education at Harper College. The recent continuing education students noted their number one option was a box ad telephone number followed by a section of the newsprint schedule. The general adult population listed their top choice as a specific section of the newsprint schedule, with their second choice as information from their professional association.

Recent Harper continuing education students were also asked several other questions. While there was a preference for two semester continuing education schedules - personal enrichment vs. professional/career development - there was an overwhelming opinion (85%) that the current schedule is designed to easily find what they need. Less than half (43%) consider the competition before deciding to enroll in an offering at Harper College. The

Discussion of Results (continued)

vast majority (84%) expect the quality of offerings at Harper to be superior to continuing education offerings elsewhere. Only 20 percent say they save the newsprint schedule for later registration. Less than 4 percent watch cable television for ads about Harper College.

When asked to rate the most convenient times for classes, evenings were, by far, the most popular followed by weekends and then weekdays. These recent students said, for the most part, they need only be reminded of registration once each semester through the course schedule mailed to their home.

SURVEY OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE TAKEN CONTINUING EDUCATION CLASSES AT WM. RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE

Awareness of two separate schedules mailed to their home - credit and non-credit	N	PCT
- Yes	37	67.3
- No	18	32.7
Total	55	100.0

The item on the course schedule which would catch their attention in the mail	N	PCT
- Large type	27	45.7
- Magazine size	12	20.3
- Consistency of format	7	11.9
- Art design	5	8.5
- Humorous picture	4	6.8
- Picture of the school	3	5.1
- Newspaper size	1	1.7
Total	59	100.0

If person already has college degree, where would they turn to get information on Harper's non-degree or certificate courses	N	PCT
- Box ad telling where to call for more information	18.5	35.6
- Specific sections in the newsprint such as workforce development or personal interests	14.5	27.9
- Information through professional association	6	11.6
- Information at place of employment	5	9.6
- Testimonial and picture of person who took a class to expand their background or interest	3	5.8
- The Yellow Pages	1	1.9
- Have been frustrated talking to staff at Harper	1	1.9
- The Library	1	1.9
- Direct mail brochures	1	1.9
- Do not know	1	1.9
Total	52	100.0

What would most motivate person to take a non-degree or certificate course	N	PCT
- Course selection	38	57.6
- Time of day	16	24.3
- Cost	6	9.1
- Student advising	2	3.0
- Newsprint information	2	3.0
- General information number	1	1.5
- Instructor	1	1.5
Total	66	100.0

Types of non-degree or certification programming which would interest person the most	N	PCT
- Personal enrichment	34	59.6
- Workforce/professional	26	45.6
- Career exploration	16	28.1
- Physical fitness/wellness	10	17.5
- 50, 60+ adults	10	17.5
- Learning for fun	8	14.0
- Children's classes	3	5.3

The types of items which would make the course schedule of non-degree classes and certificate programs seen more personal	N	PCT/57
- Pictures and biographies of some instructors	36	63.2
- Testimonials and pictures of people who have benefited from continuing education programming	31	54.4
- Dollar statistics of how continuing education increases value in a person's life	17	29.8
- Cartoons and graphics throughout the course schedule	15	26.3
- Welcome by College administrator or manager	4	7.0

How often person needs to be notified of the beginning of non-degree and certificate course registration each semester at Harper College	N	PCT
- Once each semesters in course schedule	39	68.4
- At least one postcard reminder to look for semester schedule before it is mailed each semester	13	22.8
- At least twice with newsprint schedule and special flyer/brochure afterwards	3	5.3
- It would take several promotions including newsprint course schedule to motivate person	2	3.5
Total	57	100.0

Would person like two separate course schedules - one for professional/career development and one for personal enrichment?	N	PCT
- Yes	24	42.9
- No	6	10.7
- Does not matter	26	46.4
Total	56	100.0

Does person compare high school education offerings with continuing education offerings at Harper before making a decision?	N	PCT
- Yes	24	42.9
- No	32	57.1
Total	56	100.0

Are their expectations that the quality of courses would be greater at Harper than with other community offerings?	N	PCT
- Yes	48	84.2
- No	9	15.8
Total	57	100.0

Does person save Harper newsprint reference for later registration?	N	PCT
- Yes	8	20.0
- No	32	80.0
Total	40	100.0

Those who do save it do it for future reference when they know their work schedule or keep it as a reminder to register later.

Do they watch cable television for ads about classes being offered at Harper College?	N	PCT
- Yes	2	3.5
- No	55	96.5
Total	57	100.0

Is course schedule designed to easily find what the person needs?	N	PCT
- Yes	45	84.9
- No	8	15.1
Total	53	100.0

Rating of the importance of various factors in making a decision about enrolling in a continuing education class at Harper College	N	Average Importance Index*
- Convenient time/locations	57	1.09
- Course selection/diversity	57	1.14
- Content of course	57	1.14
- Reputation of the teachers/qualified instruction	57	1.39
- Well maintained equipment/environment	56	1.39
- Cost	57	1.49
- Friendly personnel/staff	58	1.60
- Comfortable classroom	57	1.72
- An incentive such as discount	57	1.88
- Word-of-mouth about quality from friends/family	56	1.91
- Available child care		
57	2.86	

* Importance Index: 1 = Very Important
2 = May Be Important
3 = Not Important

Convenience of time blocks classes are scheduled at Harper College	N	Average Convenience Index*
- Evening classes	56	1.57
- Weekend classes	55	2.00
- Day classes	54	2.28

* Convenience Index: 1 = Very Convenient
2 = Somewhat Convenient
3 = Not Convenient

General Comments

- I moved to the Washington , D. C. Area in 1986. I was a graduate of the Nursing Program in 1985. I since have MSN at Georgetown University and Nurse Practitioners Degree from George Washington University. The best education I have had in my nursing career was Harper College - the caliber of teacher was far superior to either institution. The course of study was organized and the experience designed for learning.
- Did not know there was cable TV for Harper College.
- Comfortable classroom and location - Northwest campus is too far for computer classes.

General Comments

- This survey could be improved.
- I do not receive any course schedules.
- Magazine size and format like a book - I don't have cable.
- Sometimes confusing.
- My own personal need to excel in my job or to create an opportunity.
- Course schedule is not sent to my home.
- I am aware of them, but I do not receive them unless I call and I think this is because I live out of district.
- Please send it to students who live out of district - I have to request it each semester.

TELEPHONE SURVEY OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAD NEVER TAKEN CONTINUING EDUCATION CLASSES AT WM. RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE

Awareness of two separate mailings to home - one for credit and one for non-credit	N	PCT
- Yes	100	65.8
- No	52	34.2
Total	152	100.0

What would most catch their attention in the mail?	N	PCT/134
- Magazine size	54	40.3
- Large type	39	29.1
- Picture of the school	25	18.7
- Humorous picture	23	17.2
- Newspaper size	22	16.4
- Art design	18	13.4

For those with a college degree, what would most help to look at Harper College for continuing education?	N	PCT/61
- Specific sections in the newsprint such as workforce or personal interests	26	42.6
- Information through the professional association	10	16.4
- Information at place of employment	7	11.5
- A box ad indicating where to call for more information	7	11.5
- Testimonial and picture of someone who took a class to expand their background or interest	7	11.5
- Nothing	2	3.3
- Word-of-mouth	1	1.6
- If Harper were a four-year college	1	1.6
- Harper brochure	1	1.6

What would most motivate person to take a continuing education courses at Harper College?	N	PCT/132
- Course selection	71	53.8
- Time of day	48	36.4
- Location	29	22.0
- Price	27	20.5
- Newsprint information	3	2.3
- General information number	1	.8
- Student advising	0	0

Types of Continuing Education which would interest them	N	PCT/132
- Personal enrichment	62	47.0
- Workforce/professional	54	40.9
- Learning for fun	35	26.5
- Career exploration	34	25.8
- Physical fitness/wellness	24	18.2
- Children's classes	12	9.1
- 50, 60+ adults	9	6.8

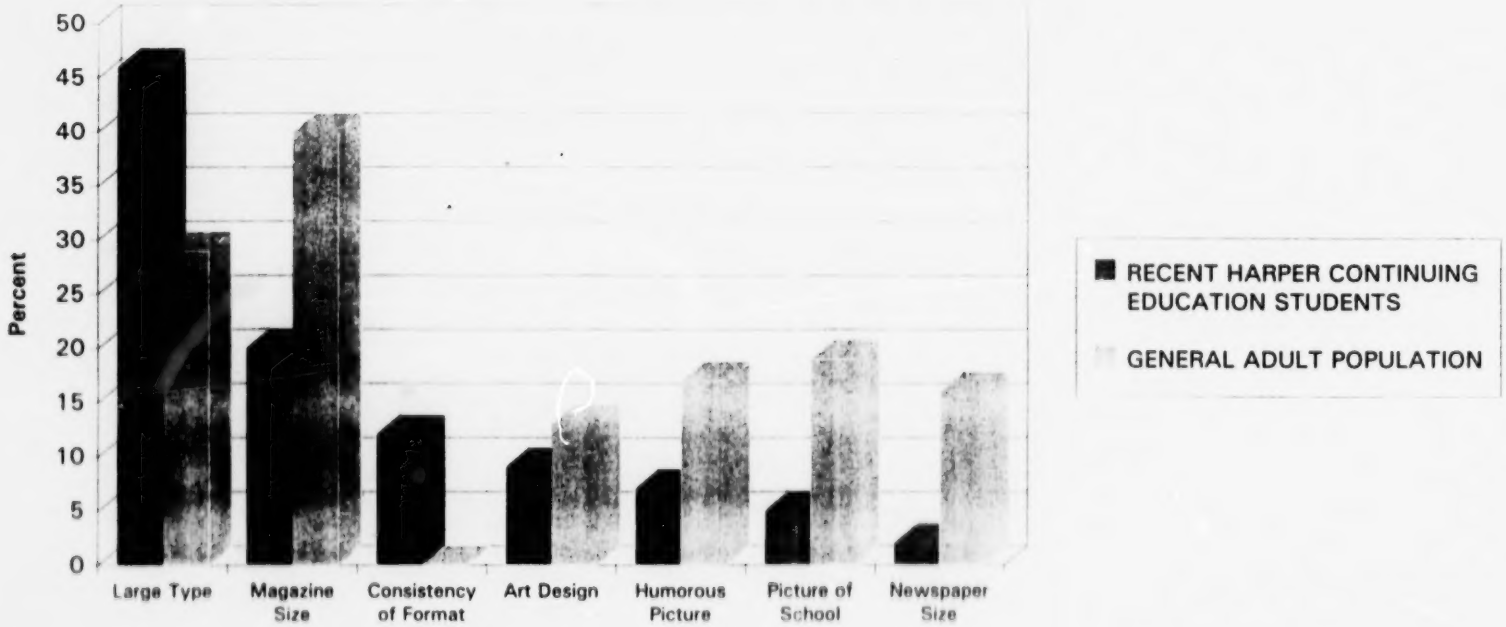
What would make continuing education newsprint more personal for you?	N	PCT/107
- Testimonials and pictures of people who have benefited from continuing education programming	46	43.0
- Pictures and biographies of some instructors	40	37.4
- Dollar statistics of how continuing education increases value in life	33	30.8
- Cartoons or graphics throughout course schedule	14	13.1
- Welcome by College administrator or manager	2	1.9

Most important attribute for person in deciding to take a class at Harper College	N	PCT/129
- Convenient time/locations	53	41.1
- Course selection/diversity	37	28.7
- Reputation of the faculty/qualified instruction	25	19.4
- Cost	25	19.4
- Word-of-mouth about quality from friends/family	15	11.6
- An incentive such as discount	8	6.2
- Available childcare	7	5.4

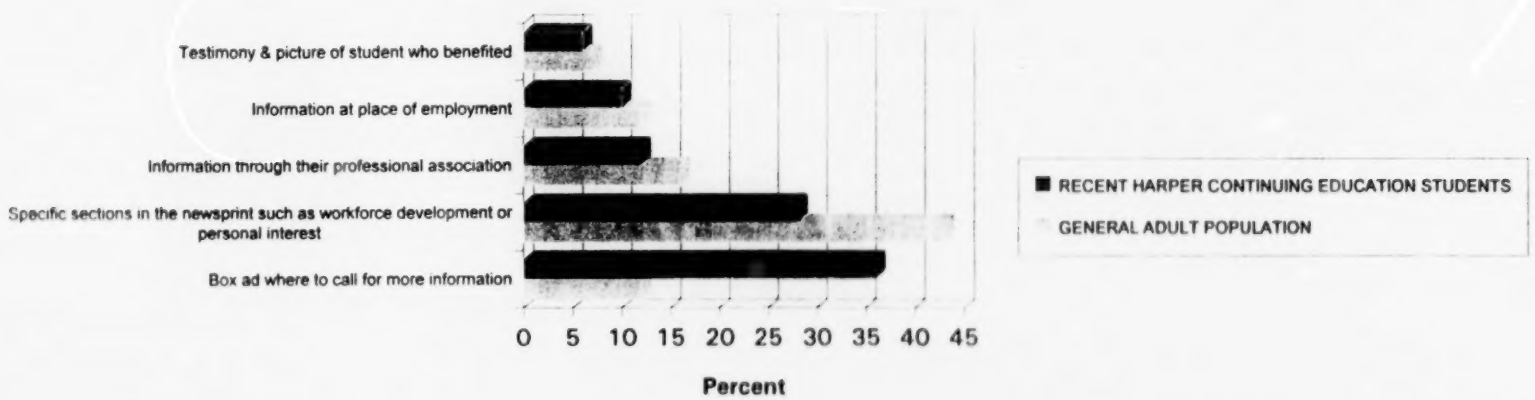
General Comments

- Not interested - throw newsprints away.
- Not interested in continuing education classes
- Harper is great - this would not matter.
- Retired grandmother - no time for continuing education classes.
- Not interested in taking continuing education classes.
- Senior citizen - would not be interested in taking continuing education classes.
- Person is 75 - would never take a continuing education class.
- At her age, she would not take any continuing education class.
- Like it the way it is.
- Nothing would catch his attention - he would not take courses here.
- He would never take a course.
- She takes classes at ECC because it is much easier to register for classes there.
- He is never planning to take courses here at Harper.
- Nothing from Harper would interest him.
- The need to take a class would be the motivation.

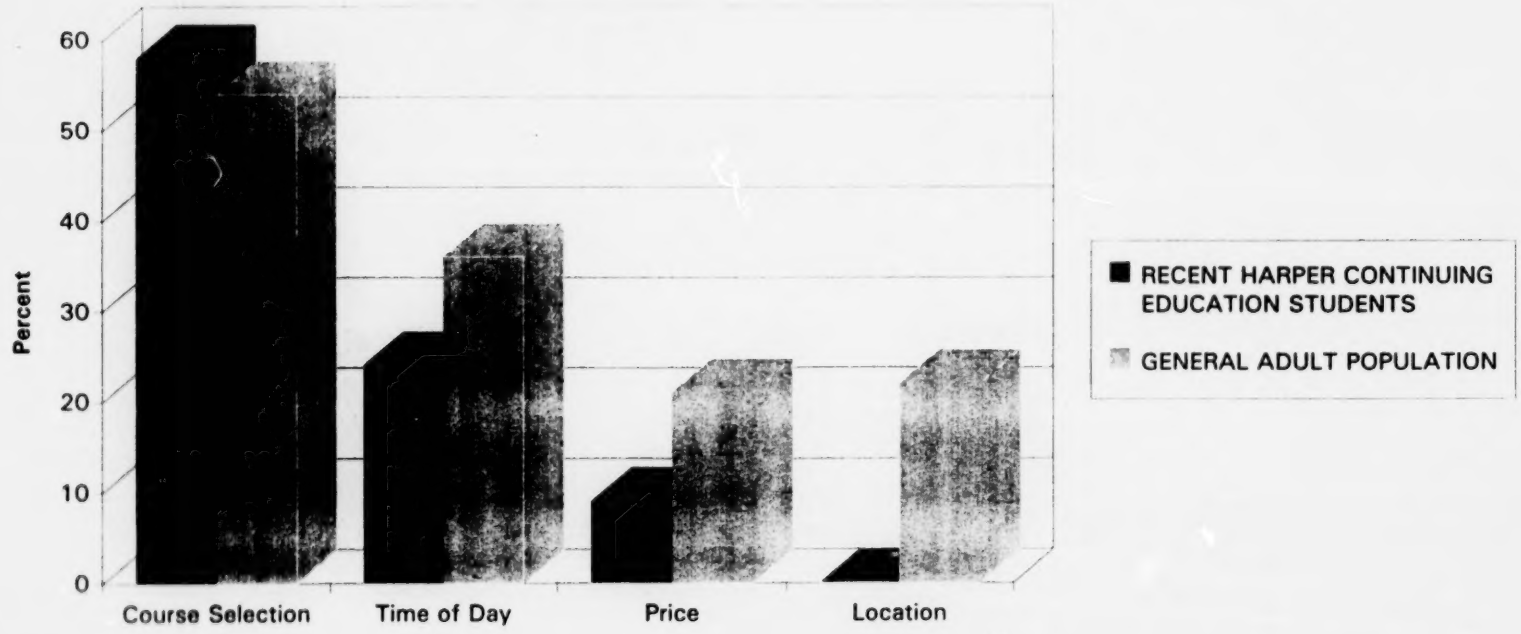
Attributes Which Would Most Likely Catch Peoples Attention In The Newsprint Semester Schedule



For Persons With A College Degree Where Would They Turn To Get Information On Harper's Non-Degree Or Certificate Courses


Testimony & picture of student who benefited
Information at place of employment
Information through their professional association
Specific sections in the newsprint such as workforce development or personal interest
Box ad where to call for more information
0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45
Percent
RECENT HARPER CONTINUING EDUCATION STUDENTS
GENERAL ADULT POPULATION

What Would Most Motivate A Person To Take A Non-Degree Or Certificate Course At Harper



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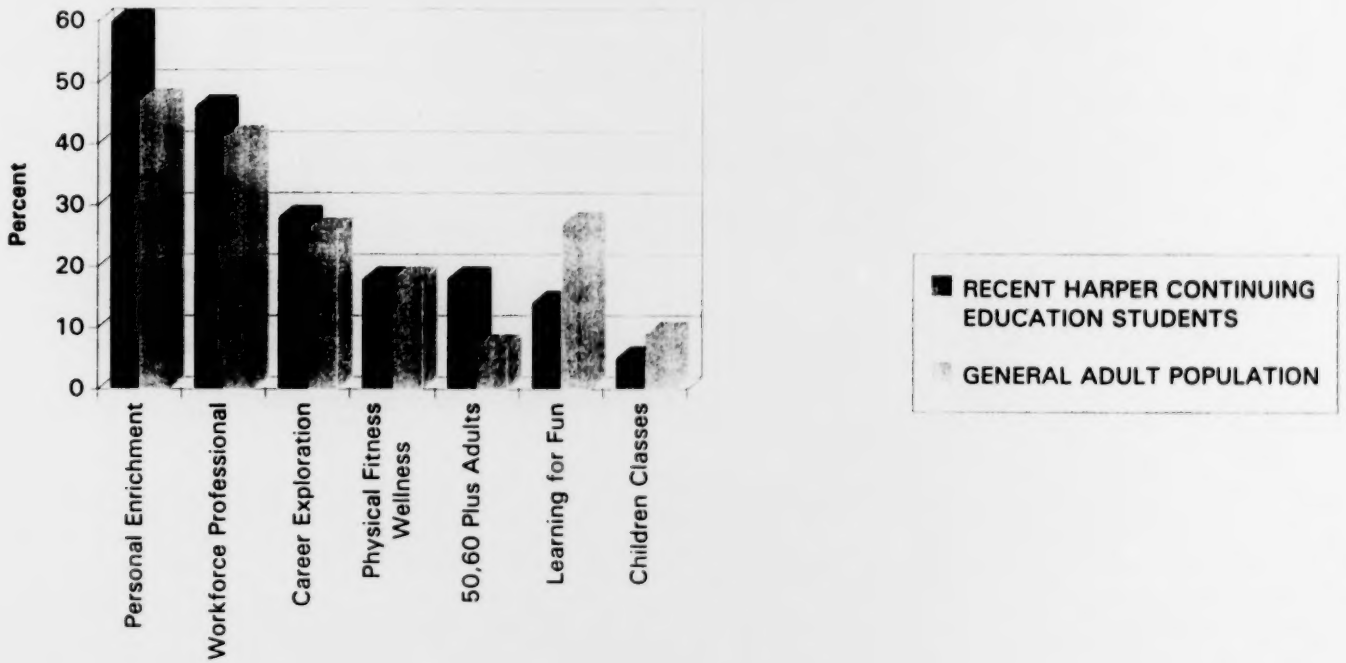
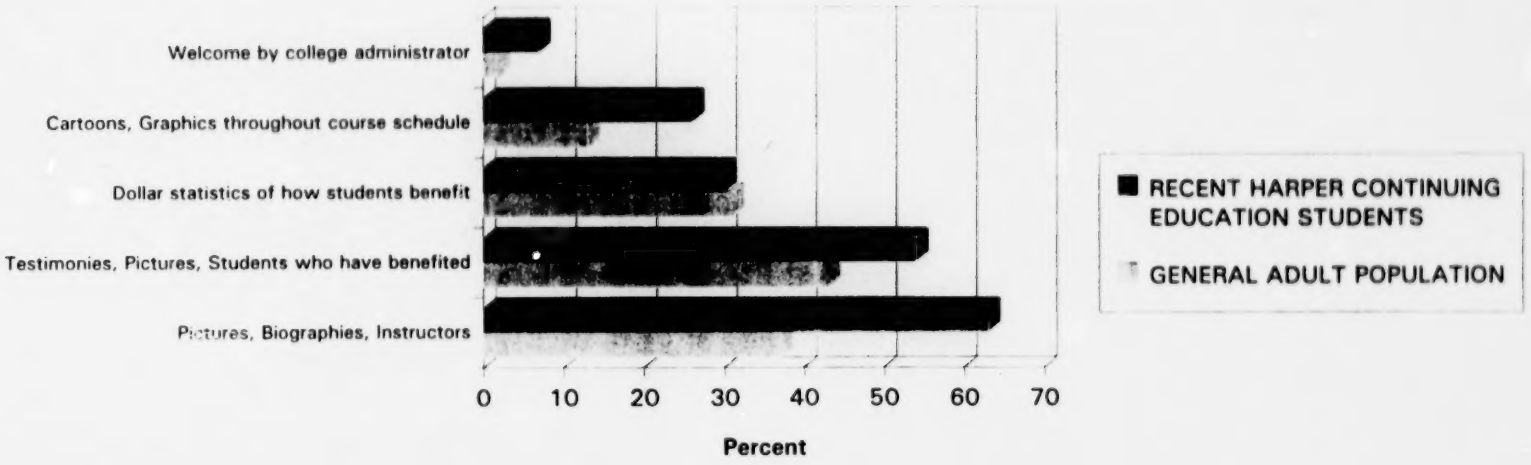
Types of Non-Degree or Certificate Programming of Greatest Interest



Characteristics Which Would Make The Course Schedule More Personal



APPENDIX

- Cover Letter

- Survey Instruments

William Rainey Harper College
1200 West Algonquin Road
Palatine, Illinois 60067-7398
708-397-3000

Spring 1996

Dear Former Harper Student:

The various Continuing Education Programs at Harper College are in the process of evaluating various strategies for marketing continuing education in the future.

You have been selected, as a former continuing education student, to answer a few questions as to what appeals to you and what is the best way to peak your interest.

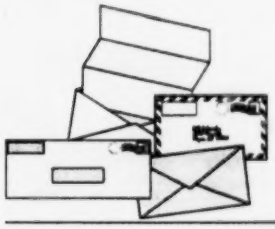
Please take a few minutes of your time to complete the enclosed survey mailing it back in the self-addressed envelope which is enclosed for your convenience.

We, at Harper College, thank you very much, in advance, for your cooperation in responding to this survey.

Very truly yours,

John A. Lucas, Director
Office of Planning and Research

jc
Enclosures



Survey of Students Who Have Taken Continuing Education Classes at Harper College

1- Are you aware of two separate course schedules mailed to your home, one for credit only and another for non-credit or certificate classes? Check (✓) one.

❑ A. Yes
❑ B. No

2- When going through your mail, which one would most catch your attention on the course schedule? Check (✓) the **one** best alternative.

❑ A. Large Type - such as Continuing Education

❑ B. Magazine Size

❑ C. Newspaper Size

❑ D. Picture of the School

❑ E. Art Design

❑ F. Humorous Picture

❑ G. Consistency of Format

3- If you already have a college degree, where would you turn to find information on Harper College's non-degree or certificate courses? Check (✓) one.

❑ A. Information through your professional association

❑ B. Specific sections in the newsprint such as workforce development or personal interests

❑ C. Information at place of employment

❑ D. A box ad indicating where to call for more information

❑ E. Testimonial and picture of someone who took a class to expand their background or interest

❑ F. Other suggestion:_____

_____

4- What would motivate you most to take a non-degree or certificate course? Check (✓) one.

❑ A. Price

❑ B. Time of Day

❑ C. Course Selection

❑ D. General Information Number

❑ E. Student Advising

❑ F. Newsprint Information

❑ G. Instructor

- Over -

5- Which **two** types of non-degree or certificate programming would interest you the most? Check (✓) **two** alternatives.

❑ A. Physical Fitness/Wellness
❑ B. Personal Enrichment
❑ C. Workforce/Professional
❑ D. 50, 60-plus Adults
❑ E. Career Exploration
❑ F. Learning for Fun
❑ G. Children's Classes

6- What **two** items would make the course schedule (sent to your home) of non-degree classes and certificate programs more "personal" for you? Check (✓) **two** alternatives.

❑ A. Pictures and biographies of some instructors
❑ B. Testimonials and pictures of people who have benefited from Continuing Education programming.
❑ C. Welcome by College Administrator or Manager
❑ D. Cartoons or graphics throughout the course schedule
❑ E. Dollar statistics of how Continuing Education increases value in my life.

7- How many different times would you need to be notified of the beginning of non-degree and certificate course registration each semester? Check (✓) one.

❑ A. Once each semester in the newsprint (course schedule)
❑ B. At least one postcard "reminder" to look for the newsprint schedule before it is mailed to my home each semester.
❑ C. At least twice - with the newsprint schedule and a special flyer/brochure afterwards.
❑ D. It would take several promotions including the newsprint course schedule to motivate me.

8- Would you like to see two separate course schedules - one for professional/career development and one other for personal enrichment? Check (✓) one.

❑ A. Yes
❑ B. No
❑ C. Does not matter

Would you please check (✓) one for each of the next four items.

9- Do you compare High School Community Education offerings with Harper Continuing Education courses before you make a decision?

❑ A. Yes
❑ B. No

10- Do you expect the level and quality of courses would be greater at Harper than with other community offerings?

❑ A. Yes
❑ B. No

11- Do you save the Harper newsprint schedule as a reference for later registration?

❑ A. No

❑ B. Yes

❑ C. If **YES**, what made you save it?_____

_____

_____

12- Do you watch Cable TV for ads about Harper College classes?

❑ A. Yes

❑ B. No

13- Is the course schedule sent to your home designed to easily find what you need? Check (✓) one.

❑ A. Yes

❑ B. No

14- Please **rate** each of the following in terms of deciding to take a course at Harper College.

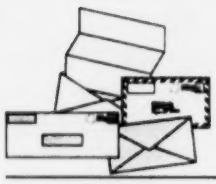
1 = Very important
2 = May be important
3 = Not important

A. Reputation of the teachers/qualified instruction	1	2	3
B. Word-of-mouth about quality from friends and family	1	2	3
C. Convenient time/locations	1	2	3
D. An incentive - such as discount	1	2	3
E. Available child care	1	2	3
F. Course selection/diversity	1	2	3
G. Friendly personnel	1	2	3
H. Comfortable classroom	1	2	3
I. Well-maintained equipment/environment	1	2	3
J. Price	1	2	3
K. Content of course	1	2	3

15- How convenient are the following times for you to attend classes at Harper. Check (✓) one in each column.

		Very convenient	Somewhat convenient	Not convenient
A.	Day classes	_____	_____	_____
B.	Evening Classes	_____	_____	_____
C.	Weekend Classes	_____	_____	_____

THANK YOU for taking time out of your busy schedule to respond to this survey. Your responses are very important to Harper College and its continuing effort to improve its services.



Telephone Survey of Individuals Who Have Never Taken Continuing Education Classes at Harper College

1- Are you aware of two separate newsprint's mailed to your home, one for credit only and another for Continuing Education (CEU or non-credit)? Check (✓) one.

❑ A. Yes

❑ B. No

2- Which one would most catch your attention when going through your mail? Check (✓) the **one** best alternative.

❑ A. Large Type - such as Continuing Education

❑ B. Magazine Size

❑ C. Newspaper Size

❑ D. Picture of the School

❑ E. Art Design

❑ F. Humorous Picture

3- If you already have a degree, what one would most help you look to Harper College for Continuing Education (non-degree or certificate)? Check (✓) one.

❑ A. Information through your professional association

❑ B. Specific sections in the newsprint such as workforce development or personal interests

❑ C. Information at place of employment

❑ D. A box ad indicating where to call for more information

❑ E. Testimonial and picture of someone who took a class to expand their background or interest

❑ F. Other suggestion:_____

_____

4- What would motivate you most to take a Continuing Education (non-degree or certificate) course? Check (✓) one.

❑ A. Price

❑ B. Time of Day

❑ C. Course Selection

❑ D. General Information Number

❑ E. Student Advising

❑ F. Newsprint Information

❑ G. Location

5- Which **two** types of Continuing Education (non-degree) programming would interest you the most? Check (✓) **two** alternatives.

- ❑ A. Physical Fitness/Wellness
- ❑ B. Personal Enrichment
- ❑ C. Workforce/Professional
- ❑ D. 50, 60-pl .s Adults
- ❑ E. Career Exploration
- ❑ F. Learning for Fun
- ❑ G. Children's Classes

6- What **two** items would make the Continuing Education newsprint (non-degree course schedule) more "personal" for you? Check (✓) **two** alternatives.

- ❑ A. Pictures and biographies of some instructors
- ❑ B. Testimonials and pictures of people who have benefited from Continuing Education programming.
- ❑ C. Welcome by College Administrator or Manager
- ❑ D. Cartoons or graphics throughout the course schedule
- ❑ E. Dollar statistics of how Continuing Education increases value in my life.

7- Please indicate the most important attribute for you if you did decide to take a class at Harper College. Check (✓) one.

- ❑ A. Reputation of the teachers/qualified instruction
- ❑ B. Word-of-mouth about quality from friends and family.
- ❑ C. Convenient time/locations
- ❑ D. An incentive - such as discount
- ❑ E. Available child care
- ❑ F. Course selection/diversity
- ❑ G. Price

THANK YOU for taking time out of your busy schedule to respond to this survey. Your responses are very important to Harper and its continuing effort to improve its services.

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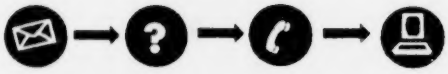

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